OE FORM 6000, 2/69

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

ERIC REPORT RESUME

ERIC ACC. NO.				IS DOCUMENT COPYRIGHTED? YES ☐ NO ☒
ED 032 302				ERIC REPRODUCTION RELEASE? YES ☐ NO ☒
CH ACC. NO.	P.A.	PUBL. DATE	ISSUE	LEVEL OF AVAILABILITY I ☒ II ☐ III ☐
TE 001 514		Apr 69	RIEJAN70	

AUTHOR
Fleitz, Jeanette; Harman, Ronald

TITLE
Free Reading Is a Simple Idea, But It Works!

SOURCE CODE	INSTITUTION (SOURCE)

SP. AG. CODE	SPONSORING AGENCY

EDRS PRICE	CONTRACT NO.	GRANT NO.
0.25;0.30		

REPORT NO.	BUREAU NO.

AVAILABILITY

JOURNAL CITATION Arizona English Bulletin; v11 n3 p6-8 Apr 1969

DESCRIPTIVE NOTE
4

DESCRIPTORS
*English Instruction; *Student Motivation; *Individual Reading; *Reading Development; Independent Reading; Junior High School Students; Motivation Techniques; Supplementary Reading Materials; Elective Reading; Individualized Reading; Recreational Reading

IDENTIFIERS

ABSTRACT
Class time devoted to individual reading is a simple, effective means of improving reading motivation in junior high schools. In order to guide students to books that they will enjoy, the teacher needs to know (1) the students' reading habits, abilities, and interests, and (2) the library facilities available. A good paperback library can be assembled with the cooperation of news agencies, book clubs, students, and second-hand stores. Booklists prepared for junior high students (e.g., "Hooked on Books: Program and Proof" by Daniel N. Fader and Elton B. McNeil) are helpful. Such a free reading program offers many learning possibilities, such as writing critiques and keeping vocabulary lists of unfamiliar words. Its main purpose, however, is to make reading self-motivated. (JM)

GPO 870-390

ED032302

TE 001 514

ARIZONA ENGLISH bulletin

TEACHING ENGLISH IN GRADES 7 - 8

Volume 11 - - - Number 3

April 1969

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

FREE READING IS A SIMPLE IDEA, BUT IT WORKS!

Jeanette Fleitz, Mountain View School, Phoenix
Ronald Harman, Christ Lutheran School, Phoenix

Despite the many controversies surrounding the field of reading, there remains one basic premise which goes unchallenged -- every child should learn to read. For concerned teachers and parents there are few learning problems more vexing than the unmotivated, poor reader. While there are no sure-fire solutions to the problem, there are some partial solutions which deserve our consideration. One of the most promising is free reading, a simple idea, but it works!

What is free reading? Simply stated, it is class time devoted entirely to individual reading. Each class member chooses his reading material and reads! Does that sound like a throwback to "Progressive Education" and the activity curriculum? The writers must admit that, at first glance, free reading has little to recommend it. At first, the idea seems to conjure up a scene all too familiar, that of the typical study period. In our scene we see several students reading for enjoyment, some are doing other school work, many are doing nothing constructive, and the teacher? Ah, yes, the teacher! He is policing and correcting papers. Free reading is not this, nor is it even remotely connected with the scene just described.

Free reading is a block of consecutive periods of reading by a group of students. It is completely structured in a manner known to the teacher but not the students - a structure which will be described later in detail. Free reading has but one objective - to foster the reading habit. To begin with, the prospective free reading teacher would set aside the entire English period, or a substantial portion of that period for several weeks. During the time set aside for free reading everyone reads - for enjoyment! There are few, if any, restrictions placed upon the students except this: They must read during that time. However, the students should understand that what they read should be something that interests them. While all this is going on the teacher reads too. He doesn't grade papers, make out lesson plans, balance his checking account, or write letters to textbook companies. He reads, and thus he gives testimony to the fact that reading for enjoyment is important, and that because it is important it deserves prime time, and, as the students say, "This thing is for real."

Reading should be enjoyable, and a free reading program begins with this assumption. The program assumes that if a student enjoys reading he will want to read increasingly more until, whether he's aware of it or not, he has cultivated the reading habit. This is precisely the kind of procedure advocated by Daniel Fader in his popular HOOKED ON BOOKS: PROGRAM AND PROOF.

"I know I should read more, but I just don't have the time." How many times have you heard that statement or statements like it from adults? What was your advice? Did you say something like this? "Reading is good for you. Every educated person reads! You'll just have to find time." Of course, you didn't say this to an adult for the simple reason that you know that many people really are pressed for time. You also know that those who rationalize their failure to read will not be motivated by your pious admonitions. Yet, so often, many of us attempt to motivate children and young people in just such a manner. Frankly, many junior high students have exceptionally heavy demands placed upon them by daily schedules, not only class schedules and extra curricular activities at school, but by time demands for activities at home, at church, or by part-time jobs. For many students the problem of finding enough time is greatly increased by the situation of having to spend long hours each week in transit to and from school. Many teachers might be greatly surprised to find out just how little time many students have to read for enjoyment in a typical school day. Under such conditions it should be

fairly obvious that only those who have become avid readers are going to find time to read for enjoyment. Furthermore, such a program provides motivation, the greatest motivation possible in early adolescence. Everybody is doing it.

By this time you might be convinced that free reading has merits; perhaps it does provide an opportunity to promote reading for enjoyment. But you hasten to add that enjoyment is not enough. If such a program is to be given prime class time, it should be possible to justify its existence on educational merit, not merely on its popularity with students. Our basic assumption was that reading should be enjoyable, with the implication that students experiencing pleasure in reading will read more and more until there is a reading habit. However, to that basic assumption we must add yet another, that the student will progress up the ladder of reading difficulty of his own volition faster than if he's forced to do so within the structure of forced reading in a formal class. This, of course, is assuming quite a bit. However, there is evidence from research that such is the case. Back in the late '30's Dr. Lou LaBrant conducted a free reading experiment in the Ohio State University lab school, a study which covered a three year period. Dr. LaBrant concluded that students read more than they did before the program began; that students did move up the ladder of reading difficulty and literary taste. However, a great deal of this progression is the result of nudging by the teacher. As we mentioned earlier, the teacher is an integral part of the process, not merely a by-stander who sets the stage and then stands back to watch the magic "do its stuff." First of all, the teacher must know the students' reading habits, abilities, and interests. Secondly, the teacher must be sufficiently acquainted with the library facilities at <u>his</u> disposal to give on-the-spot recommendations when such recommendations are needed. After a student reads a book that interests him, he may want another like it. The first book has provided the initial spark which can become the motivation for increased reading. If there is any kind of rapport between student and teacher, the student will seek the advice of the teacher when faced with the dilemma, "Where can I find a book like the one I just read?" At this crucial point the teacher suggests a book he knows will capture the student's interest, but one which will, at the same time, provide a more challenging reading experience. Because one has no way of knowing what will come up next, it is very important that the teacher reads and knows as many adolescent books and authors as possible. He should be able to lead students into interesting books, both paperback and hardcover, and should help a student progress up the ladder of reading difficulty. Thus, free reading becomes a great deal more teacher-directed than it appears to be at first glance. The big difference between this activity and so many we spend time doing in school is that the motivation for doing it remains with the students.

Some teachers may scoff at adolescent literature and say it is not "good" literature; but the point is that students do like it and there is some excellent material available. Properly lead by a teacher, students soon progress from one stage to a higher one. It is important for the teacher to recognize the fact that students will read and enjoy adolescent literature.

There are several good sources a teacher may use in selecting paperbacks. YOUR READING, a book list for Junior High Schools prepared by Charles B. Willard, lists almost 1300 books for junior high school students. BOOKS AND THE TEEN-AGE READER, by G. Robert Carlsen, provides a descriptive guide to 700 books and offers some practical, professional advice for teachers, librarians and parents on teen-age reading. BOOKS FOR YOU, prepared by the Committee on The Senior High School Book List of the National Council of Teachers of English, is a helpful annotated guide of over 2000 books. HOOKED ON BOOKS: PROGRAM AND PROOF, by Daniel N. Fader and Elton B. McNeil, is an excellent book about the free reading program, with study guides for teachers and a documented research section. THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY CATALOG, by H. W. Wilson Company, may also be used as a guide for selections by a teacher, and THE CHILDREN'S CATALOG, by the

same company is a classified catalog of books appropriate for first grade through eighth.

One of the major problems of a free reading program is obtaining material. If the teacher is to have a successful free reading program the student must be provided with a wide variety of reading material. A poor paperback section in a school library is no reason for a teacher to reject a free reading program. There are ways to build a paperback library. For example:

1. Students and other teachers may donate books.
2. Teachers can attend book sales for bargains.
3. A second-hand store offers many good paperbacks at discount prices.
4. News agencies are usually very willing to provide discounts and free book racks.
5. News agencies often allow teachers to take books out on consignment for sale.
6. Book clubs provide bonus books free of charge when minimum orders are met.
7. Bake sales, car washes, taffy apple sales, etc., may be used to earn money to buy paperbacks for a classroom library.
8. Ask your supervisor for books--if refused (no money available), keep asking.
9. Speak to your librarian about purchasing paperbacks; perhaps she has a fund she can use.
10. When all else fails, buy a few yourself. It won't bankrupt you.

A free reading program has unlimited possibilities. To help the teacher build a file about paperbacks she might have each student write a brief summary and recommendation on a 4 x 6 card. These may be kept on file in a shoebox and used as a reference source by students. This is a convenient method for a teacher to acquaint himself with many paperbacks.

The teacher may require students to write short critiques of what he reads. Style, characterization, point of view, plot, theme . . . these may be mentioned by the student in his writing. An individual folder, made by the student, is a neat and efficient way for a student to keep his work. It provides the teacher with a means for evaluating a student's progress, composition and reasoning. Vocabulary words may be taken from a child's reading and kept in a vocabulary folder. To give a vocabulary test to a class, the teacher may ask each student to use fifteen or twenty of his vocabulary words correctly in a sentence. The folder may be used as a check.

A paperback book store in the school is another logical step in free reading. Here a teacher may contact a book supplier for free book racks and books on consignment. Students may help the teacher select books to sell. One may be surprised at how many students buy paperbacks if they are available. Once they have made a purchase they need an opportunity to read - another reason for free reading.

Reading is a process, not a subject. To be a continuing process it must be self-motivated. Interesting reading material and a resourceful teacher will provide the impetus for that self-motivation. Nothing, however, is effective if the student does not have time to read. Free reading provides that time.